



After the waters receded: A qualitative study of university officials' disaster experiences during the Great Iowa Flood of 2008

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Abstract:

When the Great Flood of 2008 hit towns across Eastern Iowa, officials from the University of Iowa shut its operations for a week, relocated and evacuated students and community residents, and suffered damage to over a dozen buildings. This study is a qualitative assessment of the experiences and perceptions of twelve university officials involved in the response and management of the disaster. Major themes are presented according to phases of the Disaster Management Cycle. During the preparedness phase, an established all-hazards plan as well as specific annexes for flooding and pandemic influenza proved to enhance community response to the flood. However, training university clientele across a large organization to execute these plans and respond to future disasters is not an easy task. The content and effective means for delivering these trainings are areas for further research. During the response phase of the flood, officials swiftly expedited a business continuity plan to assure that personnel were paid during the university closure. However, enforcing a policy to avoid coming to work during the closure was challenging. Thus, future work must be done to determine and implement effective disaster communications that relay clear messages about roles and responsibilities. Now, in recovery, the university must rebuild its infrastructure and consider potential mental health issues. Lessons learned from the Great Flood of 2008 provide the opportunity to self-assess and prepare universities for disasters in the future.

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Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Policymaker, Public

Other Communication Audience: University employees

Exposure :

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weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Human Conflict/Displacement

Extreme Weather Event: Flooding

Geographic Feature: 

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Freshwater

Geographic Location: 

resource focuses on specific location

United States

Health Impact: 

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

General Health Impact, Infectious Disease, Mental Health/Stress

Infectious Disease: Airborne Disease

Airborne Disease: Influenza

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Stress Disorder

Intervention: 

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

A focus of content

Medical Community Engagement: 

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation: 

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Resource Type: 

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Resilience: 

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

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Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content